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AUTHOR Rose, Norman M.
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ABSTRACT

The series "Partners in Urban Education" focuses on the most important resource available to the urban school and community-people. Parents, paraprofessionals, teachers, and principals are recognized as equal partners in the education of the urban child. The series contains one handbook for each of these partners; this document comprises the handbook for paraprofessionals. It seeks to help the school aide think about his job; answer questions about it; and assist teachers, administrators, and others in educating children. Topics covered include knowing what the aide has to offer to the school, working in a school situation, bringing school and community together, learning new skills, and preparing for greater responsibility. (DDO)

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PARTNERS IN URBAN EDUCATION

WORKING AS AN AIDE IN AN INNER-CITY SCHOOL

NORMAN M. ROSE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
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Morristown, New Jersey • Park Ridge, Illinois • Palo Alto • Dallas • Atlanta

Norman M. Rose
In-Service Education
and Volunteer Coordinator
Milwaukee Public Schools
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

CONSULTANTS

Earline Davis, Principal
Camden Street School
Newark, New Jersey

Anne E. Hughes, Curriculum Director
Region 7, Detroit Public Schools
Detroit, Michigan

James Robinson, Principal
McKinley School
San Francisco, California

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Foreword

It is not difficult to catalog urban school failures. Countless numbers of people, professional and nonprofessional, have done so. And it is not difficult to show how some of this cataloging has resulted in attracting attention to areas that have long needed attention. Yet in many urban schools, children *are* receiving the education they need to meet the challenges of the world they live in. These schools, often lacking adequate facilities and resources, have one thing in common: cooperation between home and school in the education of the child. That's what *Partners in Urban Education* is all about.

Partners in Urban Education focuses on the most important resource available to the urban school and community—people. Parents, paraprofessionals, teachers, and principals are recognized as *equal* partners in the education of the urban child. The series contains one handbook for each of these partners. And each is encouraged to cooperate with the other members of the partnership team. *Partners in Urban Education* is designed for those who know that urban schools are far from perfect but who understand that these schools are what we have to work with today to provide the urban child with the education he will need for his tomorrow.

Partners in Urban Education will not resolve all or even most of the problems that exist in urban schools today. No series of books can. It *is* designed to foster the kind of communication and cooperation that will lead to a resolution of those problems. And it is designed to initiate positive response where it counts most—in the urban school and in the community that school serves. To the hundreds of people who have shared their views with us—parents and principals, superintendents and supervisors, trainers and teachers—we give our thanks. To those continuing to work with and *for* the urban child, we give this pledge: To continue to work with you as *Partners in Urban Education*.

William K. Cordier, President
General Learning Corporation

Introduction

By becoming a school aide, you have joined about one quarter of a million other adults in providing additional service to America's school children. The general category of school aide has become the fastest growing group of employees in our country. Inner-city schools have experienced great difficulties in meeting all the needs of children living there. The assistance of school aides who know the children and the community has been one of the most promising educational changes in recent years.

No two schools are exactly alike. And your job will not be exactly like anyone else's. Because your job is a fairly new one, it is changing and growing. Like anyone else entering a new position, you have questions about that job. "What will be expected of me?" "With whom will I work?" "How will I get along?" Like everyone else, you wonder whether what you have to offer is important to your employer.

This handbook will help you think about your job, help answer questions about it, and help you as you assist teachers, administrators, and others to educate children. This handbook will help you as you begin to talk with parents, school personnel, and your neighbors about the education of our youth. We hope this handbook will help you fulfill your role as a partner in urban education.

1 Knowing What You Have to Offer

As an aide in an inner-city school, you probably live in or near your school neighborhood. As a resident of the school community, you are in a position to make unique contributions to school life. It will be helpful to begin by taking some time to think about the things you have to offer to the school.

Knowledge of Your Community

Your personal knowledge of the places and people in your community is just one asset that will make you a valuable addition to the school staff. But it is an important asset. This knowledge will help ensure that the children in your community will get the kind of education they deserve.

Thinking about streets. Think of the places you see every day, the places you pass on your way to work or on your shopping trips. Make a list or draw a simple map of the streets in your community. Which ones are wide? Which are narrow? Which ones are too busy for small children to cross? Does your neighborhood have streets that children should avoid? Do you know any streets safe enough for children to play in?

Thinking about shops. Now, think about the stores you go to for groceries, for clothing, for hardware.

Where does your son get his hair cut? Where is the best place to get a prescription filled? Where can you buy a six-pack when Uncle Albert is coming to visit? (Keep it going, now, thinking about those business places in your neighborhood.)

Thinking about special places. Think about the special places in your community. List the community churches. Are there any parks within walking distance of the school? Are there junkyards or factories unsafe for curious children? Are there community agencies that offer recreation or tutoring for children? You can probably think of many special places in your community. Good. As a school aide you will be able to use this knowledge.

Thinking about people. Think about the people who live in your community. How many do you know by name? Who can help an injured child? Whom do you trust for advice? Who is active in politics, in sports, in the church? Your knowledge of community people is valuable. You will be able to put this knowledge to good use in your role as school aide.

Understanding of Neighborhood Children

Another important asset you bring to your job is your knowledge and understanding of neighborhood children. The kind of education provided is partly determined by what educators know about their students' backgrounds and life-styles. Yet very few inner-city teachers and administrators, white or black,

grew up in the inner city or live there now. While they may try very hard to understand inner-city children, it will be most helpful if they can call upon your more direct, possibly first-hand, experience with these children.

You probably know children who are coping with a family life marked by divorce, separation or desertion, illegitimacy, or poverty. You can help educators understand that although the urban child may have a "different" life-style, his life-style is not necessarily an inferior one. Your knowledge can help educators provide the kind of education that will be meaningful to the urban child.

Identifying strengths: street wisdom. Many inner-city children develop strengths that educators can build on and, therefore, need to understand. One of these strengths can be called "street wisdom." Many inner-city youngsters are quite good at "reading" other people. Through experience and necessity, they are often adept at evaluating the intentions and sincerity of those they meet. Further, they are usually better equipped to cope with the day-to-day street life than are children in suburban areas.

Identifying strengths: responsibility. Because many inner-city children grow up coping with a variety of family and economic problems, they may develop a great deal of independence and a sense of responsibility beyond that which might otherwise be expected.

How often have you seen an eight-year-old or a nine-year-old taking care of younger brothers and sisters? While such responsibility is certainly not advocated for children so young, where it is found it should be considered a personal strength to build upon.

Identifying strengths: loyalty and pride. Another characteristic of inner-city youth is a great sense of loyalty. Very often this loyalty is displayed in the defense of group or family members. This loyalty is a strength that the child can learn to use to his benefit. Inner-city youth are also displaying a sense of pride—pride in their race, pride in the accomplishments of their ethnic brothers and sisters, pride in themselves as maturing individuals. Observing these and other positive values of the children you have contact with will increase your opportunities to contribute to the school program.

Helping the School Understand the Community

Communities are characterized by the ebb and flow of the lives of the people, their hopes and aspirations, their joys and heartaches, their successes and failures, their problems and their striving for solutions. One of the most valuable services you can perform as a school aide is to help the other school people understand the community.

Knowing community concerns. You have many opportunities to listen to the concerns expressed by

your neighbors. People will let you know what's bothering them about the school, about kids, about the neighborhood, about their lives in general. You must not think you have to become a neighborhood gossip to be a good school aide. In fact, you would lessen your service to both school and community by doing so. You can serve your neighbors *and* the school by helping the school understand what community people are concerned about. Schools need all the information they can get about their communities. We see educators today listening to students, to parents, to neighborhood representatives, to politicians, and to sociologists. Educators use information from these sources and others to help develop educational programs. Teachers and administrators will generally be appreciative of the community knowledge you are able to share with them.

Knowing community home life. Teachers and administrators benefit from knowing about students' home life. If the school is in a neighborhood of mainly small, crowded apartments, it may be unrealistic for teachers to expect children to have a quiet place in which to study. In a neighborhood with large numbers of families from rural backgrounds, students might benefit from courses in simple home repairs. Children from homes with little money for decorations might appreciate art class projects designed to brighten walls and lift spirits. The better the school understands its families, the better able the school will be to develop programs to meet children's needs.

Knowing community job patterns. The school can benefit from your knowledge of economic aspects of community life. When teachers know that children and their families are worried about layoffs and strikes, or rumors of layoffs and strikes, they can be prepared for increased anxiety and tension in the classroom. A better understanding of the employment patterns can lead to the development of vocational training classes more in keeping with local job opportunities. Also, teachers can call on adults with special talents, skills, or occupations to give talks or demonstrations to groups of students.

Knowing community assets. As you think about how you can help the school understand the community, look for local assets that might benefit the school. Among these might be an active woman's club or an ethnic arts-and-crafts workshop. By using your knowledge of the community, you will be contributing to one of the major areas of change in education today—community education. The idea, greatly simplified, is that education in the schools and the problems of society are bound together and should be worked out together. There is a growing movement to extend the schools out into the community by using all the resources of the community for educational purposes. At the same time, the community makes use of the resources of the school to meet its needs—to grow and to expand in terms of the individual and the group.

Helping the Community Understand the School

To be of value, understanding needs to work in two directions. It is not enough for the schools to understand their communities. Communities must understand the schools. As a school aide, you are in a unique position to help your community develop its understanding of the goals, the concerns, and the strengths of the schools.

Knowing and understanding school goals. Working as a school aide gives you many opportunities to become acquainted with the goals of the school. School goals are not always well understood by parents and other community members. For instance, one school goal may be to help children develop a greater appreciation of the community and its setting. One activity to reach this goal might be a series of field trips around the neighborhood. Without understanding the goal, parents or other spectators might think the class is just out on a lark, neglecting their class studies. In another case, parents might take exception to a frank classroom discussion of illegitimacy or venereal disease if they do not understand the school's goals in the area of health and family education.

Communicating school goals. As you learn more and more about your school's goals, you will be able to communicate these to other members of the community. Take time to assess your knowledge on this matter. What do you know about your school's goals?

What does your school hope to accomplish in developing basic skills—reading, speaking, mathematics? What are the goals for preparing children for better citizenship, for earning a livelihood, for using their leisure time, for family life? As the community understands these goals, it will appreciate and support the programs designed to reach these goals.

Knowing school concerns. The schools have concerns that relate to the community. In some cities, financial support is falling behind the needs, greatly hampering school operations. Educators recognize that the education of children is too important to be left solely to the schools. Yet in many inner-city schools, teachers feel that parents are not interested in their children's education. Parent meetings and parent-teacher conferences are often poorly attended. Teachers depend a great deal upon the self-discipline of children to maintain a good working and learning atmosphere in the classrooms. However, it often appears to teachers that parents are too permissive or unconcerned about the discipline of their children. By sharing your knowledge of school concerns with the community, you will help the community better understand the school.

Know Yourself

Your own personality is one of your greatest assets. Boys and girls will see you as another adult in the learning situation. They may identify with you and look to you as a model. This is a great responsibility.

Thinking about appearance. You will want to consider the influence you have on children. Do your clothes suggest that you consider working in the school important? Dress habits of school personnel vary from place to place, but it does become difficult to maintain a businesslike atmosphere when wearing sports clothes. Nowadays we can hardly say what students can or cannot wear, but *we* can set a good example in dress and in personal grooming.

Thinking about attitude. Clothing, grooming, and other personal habits reflect your attitude. In the long run, your attitude matters most. If children see you as a positive, optimistic, supportive type of adult, they will be encouraged to adopt similar attitudes toward their work and toward each other.

Putting it together. You now know you have a great deal to offer as a school aide. Teachers, parents, and students will benefit from the work you do. This job will be one of the most demanding and challenging you have ever had. But it will also be one of the most rewarding. You will have the opportunity to help bring together the home and the school in the educational process. And you will have the opportunity to help the inner-city child get the kind of education he deserves.

2 Working in a School Situation

The role of the school aide varies from place to place. In fact, few people agree on any one title that can be given to all school aides. In one school you may be called a "paraprofessional"; in another, a "teacher assistant"; in still another, an "auxiliary staff member." You can probably add other titles to this list: "clerical aide," "library aide," "Head Start aide," even "school-community coordinator." The many different titles given to the school aide indicate the variety of roles you can fill.

To make the going easier for you, this handbook will use just one title, "school aide." The term *school aide* will include all those who are hired to assist in instructional or related activities but who are not licensed teachers. So when you read the words "school aide" in this handbook, you will know that means *you*, regardless of the title you are given.

No handbook can explain to every school aide exactly what he or she will be doing on the job. But there are some kinds of information about working in a school situation that every aide should have. The purpose of this section is to make you aware of some of the information you will need and to help you get that information.

Preparing for Your Job

There are many different ways to prepare yourself for a job as a school aide. One way is to think about what you have to offer to the school. You did that as you read the first section of this handbook. Another way is to take advantage of any training provided for school aides. Perhaps your school district requires you to attend training sessions. If so, you will find that your work in the school will be much easier for you because of the training you receive. In some schools, the new aide is asked only to meet with the principal or a supervisor to discuss the work he will be doing. Usually you will be given the information you need. But there may be times when you will have to ask for information.

School policy. You will need to understand general school policy *before* you begin your job. School policy is simply rules that apply to the school. Most of the rules that govern the school are designed to protect students, employees, and the taxpayer. Perhaps you will be given a handbook that explains school policy. If you are, then you will want to study it carefully. If no handbook is available, the principal or a supervisor will discuss the school policy with you. If you do not understand, do not be afraid to say so. Remember, someone had to explain school policy to the principal and to the supervisor as well. Here are some of the questions you may want to ask.

1. Who is responsible for student discipline?

2. Am I responsible for student discipline in any way? If so, how?
3. Is anyone permitted to distribute advertising materials in the school? If so, which kinds?
4. Am I permitted to give out the names and addresses of students? If so, to whom and under what conditions?
5. Is smoking permitted in the school building or on the school grounds? If so, are there specific areas where this is permitted?
6. Are parents permitted to see their children's school records? If so, am I permitted to make these records available?
7. Are visitors permitted in the school building? If so, am I permitted to admit them?
8. Are there certain matters that should not be discussed outside the school building?
9. Who is responsible for stating school policy to the community?

Personnel policies. There are some school policies that relate to people working in or for the school. These policies shape your daily work and help you understand what is expected of you as a school employee. Most school personnel policies are designed to protect you. In fact, in some areas aides have organized into unions, which have negotiated contracts covering policies. If this is true in your district, a copy of the union contract will be available to you. If no contract is available, these are some of the questions you may want to ask.

1. At what time must I report for work?
2. Which days am I expected to work?
3. What is the procedure if I am absent because of illness? Who should be notified?
4. What is my rate of pay? May I expect raises?
5. How will I be evaluated and by whom?
6. Am I protected if hurt while at the school?
7. Will I be eligible for fringe benefits, such as health insurance and social security?
8. May I request a transfer to another school?
9. What are the grounds for dismissal?

Schools, like other employers, want to maintain good relationships with their employees. Good relationships are based on mutual understanding. Your knowledge of the personnel policies and practices will contribute to this understanding. This is an important part of job preparation.

Knowing What Is Expected of You

Your specific duties will vary a great deal, depending on the type of aide position you hold and the level of the school in which you work. Your duties as a library aide in an elementary school will differ greatly from your duties as a hall monitor in a high school. In a few situations, the school will have a very specific job description listing your duties in detail. In most cases, however, the principal or your supervisor will be reevaluating your job frequently to make the best use of your talents. Even though your job is a changing one, you may expect your

duties to fall into at least one of three general areas: (1) noninstructional duties; (2) instructional duties; (3) home-school duties.

Noninstructional Duties

Noninstructional duties are those duties that often take place outside the classroom. Even when they are carried out in the classroom, they are not directly related to the teaching of children. Effective education in the classroom often depends on the work that is done outside the classroom.

There are two types of noninstructional duties: (1) duties that contribute to the smooth operation of the school, and (2) duties that support the teaching-learning process. Both kinds of noninstructional duties offer you a great deal of variety and challenge. Most you will be able to perform with a minimum of formal training.

Duties that contribute to school operation. The noninstructional duties that contribute to the smooth operation of the school cover a variety of areas. These duties will give you a chance to become familiar with the school personnel and school facilities. Among these duties are the following.

1. Supervising pupils in corridors, lunchrooms, and playgrounds
2. Monitoring entrances to keep unauthorized personnel out of the school and to give directions to parents and visitors

3. Supervising, temporarily, a group of children when the teacher is called away for an emergency
4. Assisting in the distribution of school supplies
5. Collecting lunch monies or field-trip fees
6. Accompanying a child to the school's health room
7. Patrolling lavatory and locker room areas
8. Dealing with disturbed or emotionally upset children until they have calmed down

Duties that support the teaching-learning process. Many noninstructional duties directly support the teaching-learning process. Your work will contribute directly to classroom activities. These duties will help you understand the many ways in which children learn and enable you to prepare learning materials. Among these duties are the following.

1. Preparing instructional materials, such as work sheets, tests, and overhead transparencies
2. Typing or duplicating materials prepared by teachers
3. Compiling picture files for classroom use
4. Correcting test papers
5. Assisting individual pupils during study periods
6. Assisting with keeping classroom records, such as attendance and assignment records
7. Obtaining and operating audio-visual equipment
8. Maintaining science, industrial education, and home economics equipment and supplies
9. Assisting with the supervision of children during field trips
10. Assisting in the guidance office

Instructional Duties

In most instances, you will be assigned instructional duties only after you have received some formal training. This training will usually be training received at the college or junior college level. You should not be discouraged by this training requirement. It can be just the incentive you need to get that additional education you always wanted.

In some schools, aides are given the opportunity to further their education at school expense. In other schools, aides receive additional salary for the additional knowledge and skill they bring to their job. More and more frequently, aides begin with noninstructional duties, and then enroll in colleges or universities to prepare for teaching jobs. This is not accomplished easily. It takes several years to get the training required to become a classroom teacher. But your job gives you an advantage that few other jobs have—knowing where you want to go and exactly what you have to do to get there.

When you are assigned instructional duties, you will be working directly with teachers and students. Instructional duties are exciting, varied, and challenging. These are some of the duties.

1. Tutoring one or more children in specific skills
2. Administering tests and examinations
3. Assisting students in the use of equipment, such as the microscope or film projector

4. Preparing study outlines, book lists, and tests
5. Locating books, films, and other instructional materials for classroom or departmental use
6. Assisting in setting up and maintaining departmental resource centers
7. Correcting written assignments
8. Assisting groups of students with special class projects and research assignments

Home-School Duties

One of the most exciting areas for a school aide is home-school duties. Even if your school employs a school-community coordinator you will have the opportunity to carry out some home-school duties. These are some of the duties.

1. Helping children understand school rules and expectations
2. Visiting parents of children new to the school
3. Inviting parents to the school to visit and to attend parent-teacher functions
4. Visiting the homes of children who are habitually tardy or absent
5. Interpreting language for parents and teachers
6. Discussing with parents their feelings about the school
7. Discussing with teachers their feelings about the community
8. Assisting parents and teachers to arrange conferences
9. Accompanying sick children to their homes

10. Helping teachers and parents understand certain learning and behavior prablems that relate to the home and slow the educational process

Getting Straight on Supervision

Regardless of the duties you are assigned, you will want to make sure you know who will make your assignments and to whom you will report. In most cases you will be assigned to a specific school and asked to report directly to the principal. The principal may ask someone else to supervise your work. This may be an assistant principal, a teacher, or even an experienced aide. In most elementary schools you will work with one or more teachers, who will be identified for you. In a large secondary school, you will be more likely to work in a group, performing routine duties on a regular basis and receiving special assignments.

Because you will be working closely with people, it will be important for you to know a little about them. Again, keep in mind that your job is a new and changing one. You may not have worked with school personnel before, and school personnel may never have worked with an aide before. How well you work with school personnel depends a great deal on how much you want to work well with them.

Working with the School Principal

Your first contact at an individual school will probably be with the principal. Usually the principal sets

the tone or the learning atmosphere for the entire school. Those inner-city schools that are doing an excellent job of educating children are administered by principals who instill confidence, optimism, and enthusiasm in the children, the staff, and community residents. Since you will be working either directly or indirectly with the principal, you will want to understand his or her role and how you will relate to that role.

The principal: an administrator. First, the principal is charged, by law, with the physical protection of the children, the staff, and the building. As you know, some of your duties may include helping to protect the safety of students. The principal is also responsible for carrying out the policies of the school board that relate to the enrollment and attendance of children. He protects you as a taxpayer, by certifying payroll records of the employees and by keeping an inventory of the equipment and supplies purchased for the school. Some of the duties you may be asked to perform will assist in these areas.

The principal: a coordinator. The principal is also concerned with the cooperation between parents and teachers. He helps the parents become better acquainted with the teachers and the school program. He assists the parents in dealing with problems concerning their children. He also assists teachers as they work with each other, with children, and with parents. In short, the principal is the manager of the school. His goal is to bring together all the people,

all the equipment, and all the books, supplies, and teaching materials in such a way that every child may be a successful learner.

The principal: an evaluator. After you have been placed in a school, the principal will tell you with whom you will work, and discuss your duties. If you have not already done so, you will want to ask questions similar to those on page 14. As long as you remain in the school, the principal will continue to take an interest in your work. Since he has an overall view of the school, he may find that your assistance is needed in another part of the building and assign you to other duties. If you see ways that you could serve the school more profitably, you should discuss this with your principal. Your school may have a formal work-evaluation procedure in which new assignments are made on a regular basis. If not, you should expect to have informal discussions with the principal about your work.

Working with Teachers

The greater part of your work is likely to be with a classroom teacher, especially at the elementary school level. Being able to talk with the teacher is the key to a good working relationship. If you do not understand what the teacher expects, ask for a further explanation. Keep in mind that while you may never have worked with a teacher before, the teacher may never have worked with an aide, either. If the two of you can keep the lines of communication open, any problems that arise can be resolved.

The teacher: a decision-maker. It is easy to say that the teacher's job is to teach. But what does that mean? Classroom teaching may be divided into three phases: deciding what children will learn, providing experiences from which children will learn, and measuring how well the children have learned. Although the teacher will remain responsible for deciding what is needed, you can provide information that will help. Your observations of the children in the neighborhood and in the school may help the teacher understand their needs and interests.

The teacher: an educator. Once the teacher has decided what children should learn, it is her job to provide the necessary learning experiences. It will be in this phase of the teacher's work that you will make your greatest contributions in a classroom. Many of the noninstructional duties listed earlier support learning experiences in the classroom. Collecting field-trip fees, duplicating materials, and operating audio-visual equipment are examples. The instructional duties are all directly related to children's learning experiences. You will want to work with the teacher in finding more ways in which you can assist with learning activities. Suggest new duties that you feel you are ready to assume. Be alert for jobs that fit your talents and interests. Talk over with the teacher ways in which you can extend your assistance in the classroom.

The teacher: an evaluator. You may also be involved with the third phase of the teacher's task, measuring

how well the children have learned. If you are tutoring or helping small groups of students, the teacher will check with you on how the students are progressing. You may also be asked to administer certain tests to the class or help correct tests. The final responsibility for reporting children's progress to parents will remain with the teacher.

The teacher: a model. The teacher serves as a model for the children in her class. As indicated earlier, you will also serve as a model for the children. You will want to cooperate closely with the teacher in presenting a consistent example of mature and responsible behavior. The way you respond to the the children, the teacher, and to other adults in the school will influence the children's attitude toward each other and toward adults. When they see you working with the teacher in a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect, they will be encouraged to do likewise.

Working with Specialists

In most of the larger urban schools, you will find a number of special teachers and professional people with whom you may be working. Among these may be reading specialists, teachers of the emotionally disturbed, guidance counselors, school psychologists, and school social workers. Most of these specialists work with individuals or small groups of children. You may be assigned the responsibility of escorting children from their regular classrooms for these special services. You might assist individual children with

various activities under the specialist's direction. You may also be asked to assist in record-keeping. Special education programs vary from city to city and even from school to school within a single district. If you are assigned to work with a specialist, you will be trained by the specialist or the program supervisor.

Working with Nonteaching Staff

Many people, with a variety of skills, are required to operate a modern school. Not all of them are teachers. While you will usually not be assigned to work directly with them, you will find your duties often bring you in contact with nonteaching staff members.

The school secretary. If you are required to sign in and out at the office each day, you will see the secretary regularly. School secretaries keep time cards, distribute pay checks, record employee absences, keep track of school records, dispense school supplies, and handle many other tasks. You will find that school secretaries are usually quite helpful when you must file a report or submit some school form such as an accident report or a medical excuse for absence. It is a good idea to call her when you will be absent, and to let her know changes in your telephone number or address, emergency contacts, and the like.

Working with other aides. It will be natural for you to form close associations with other aides in your building. Coffee or lunch is much more enjoyable when shared with friends. These occasions also

provide opportunity to share successes, ask advice, or air problems. By working together in a spirit of cooperation rather than competition, you can gather new ideas and techniques for growth in your own job.

Knowing What to Share

During the course of your duties, you will find out a great deal about various children. You will see incidents in the classroom or school of which the child himself may not be proud. You will perhaps see records or be part of professional discussions on individual children. Children will often share intimate family problems with teachers and aides. This information should be treated as confidential and not made part of the social discussion at the break period or lunch table. Even the class "trouble maker" or "problem child" must be treated with dignity and respect. You will have experiences at school that are filled with human interest, drama, humor, or pathos. You may want to share some of these experiences with family or friends. This should always be done without using the names of the children—or the teachers—involved.

Like others who make a career of working with children, you will find a great deal of personal satisfaction in your employment. Helping young people develop into intelligent, mature citizens is an exciting and humbling experience. Children deserve the best that we can give them of our efforts, of our talents, and of ourselves.

3 Bringing School and Community Together

Our society has come to expect a great deal from its schools. Educators are expected to teach children basic academic skills, to prepare youth for future jobs, to train children in good citizenship, to encourage decent living, and to transmit the ideals and values of our culture. Any one of these tasks is more than can be accomplished solely within the walls of a school building. The school and the community must work together to provide for the total education of children. As a school aide, you have important contributions to make in this area.

Establishing Effective Communication

Most human endeavors depend on communication. The doctor must communicate with his patient. The merchant must communicate with his customer. The husband must communicate with his wife. Without adequate communication, those involved in medicine, commerce, and marriage have problems. This applies to those involved in education as well.

Recognizing the importance of communication. In the inner city, school personnel have not fully understood the community; nor have community residents understood the goals and problems of the

schools. Some of the problems in urban education may be attributed to a weakness in or lack of communication. All teachers do not hear the results of educational research. State legislators may not adequately understand the financial problems of local school districts. Administrators may not fully appreciate the concerns of teachers. Taxpayers may not know how the school dollar is being spent. Communication is the basis of understanding, and clearly the lines of communication are not as open as they could be.

Recognizing the obstacles to communication. The schools have not been entirely successful in carrying their message to inner-city residents through newspapers, radio stations, posters, and other mass media. General meetings called by school groups are often ineffective in attracting parents. Parents and other community members have not always found it easy to talk to school people. School doors, locked to protect the children, often represent a barrier to those who have legitimate reasons for visiting the school. Telephone lines may often be busy. The hustle and bustle of a school office may make the school seem cold and impersonal to the visitor. The teachers and administrators may not realize that some of these obstacles to communication exist.

Opening the lines of communication. While you won't be able to solve all school-community communication problems, you can help. First, by living in the community and working in the school, you

are in a position to recognize that there are many people of goodwill in both groups who want to get together to improve the education of children in the community. Many parents may not realize that teachers can be most easily reached by phone before or just after classes. Many parents may not know about the special programs available for children with learning problems. You may be in a position to encourage parents to call a program supervisor for information or assistance. You may know several parents who would be interested in becoming volunteer tutors in the schools. You can share this information.

Helping others to communicate. No one can know everything about a large school system. When asked about a particular problem or program, you should not feel guilty about saying, "I really don't know but you can call. . . ." This approach helps you avoid providing second-hand information. It also gives you a chance to help others communicate.

Knowing how to communicate. Often person-to-person contact is the most effective means of communicating with parents. Your knowledge of the neighborhood will help in this effort. Calling on a parent after work to arrange a parent-teacher conference may be more effective than a note or phone call from the school office. A personal invitation to a parents' meeting is more likely to result in the parent's attendance than an announcement from school. A neighborhood canvass of four-year-olds could result

in more accurate kindergarten pre-enrollments than an announcement about early registration. Using your knowledge of school and community, you will find additional ways to increase communication between the two.

Dealing with Misunderstandings

A lack of communication often results in misunderstanding. Often, misunderstandings between parents and school or between parent and parent can be traced to rumors. In a school with several hundred children of various ages, rumors spread rapidly. You should be careful not to repeat ideas that do not agree with what you know about people or situations. You can also encourage others to reserve judgment or delay action until after they have obtained more direct information on the matter.

Keeping your cool. Misunderstandings are often extended and complicated by emotionalism. Indeed, it is difficult not to be emotional where one's own children are concerned. However, decisions concerning school and the education of children should be based more on reason than on emotion. Few decisions are so important that they cannot wait until emotions have simmered down a bit. In school or community meetings you can help avoid emotionalism by keeping your cool. By suggesting a break, a temporary change of topic, or a postponement of action, you may help others *regain* their cool.

Accepting other viewpoints. Misunderstandings often

lead to attacks on individuals rather than on ideas. It is easy to suspect that someone with a differing point of view has ulterior or selfish motives. The parties in a misunderstanding sometimes find themselves becoming more and more convinced of the rightness of their positions. Seldom are we 100 percent right. Different views may each contain parts of the truth and together lead to the best course of action. You may begin to resolve some misunderstanding and controversy by the simple admission "You may be right" or "I may be wrong." You can help others understand that people of goodwill *can* have honest differences of opinion and that these differences can be resolved through compromise.

Keeping the door open. When dealing with misunderstandings involving the school, it is important to keep people talking. If you can help keep the door open to further talk, you will have hope of resolving the misunderstanding. You may feel that a heated discussion is a bad situation in which to find yourself. It is still better than no discussion at all.

Helping Parents Understand Their Role

You will have many opportunities to bring school and community together by helping parents understand how important they are to the education of children. As a neighbor, and perhaps as a fellow parent, you can speak to parents about their role with a frankness the teacher or principal may not be able to use. You may find the following ideas useful when talking with parents.

Stressing personal relationships. It is good for all parents to think about their personal relationships with their children. This relationship can have a marked effect upon the way a child learns in school. Regardless of the financial condition of the home or the educational background of the parents, there are many things all parents should be doing to improve their child's chances of success in school. But if a parent is to help his child succeed, he must be able to communicate with the child. A good parent-child relationship is the basis of the communication.

Stressing physical needs. A parent is putting a child at a disadvantage in school when physical needs are not taken care of. A child sent to school tired because of lack of sleep, hungry because of a skimpy breakfast, or uncomfortable from inadequate clothing is starting out the day as a loser. Proper medical care will assure that poor health or poor eyesight is not hindering school progress. A quiet place in which to study is also important, especially as the children get into higher grades.

Stressing positive attitudes. The parents' attitude toward education is very important. If parents show that education is important and worthwhile, the child will be encouraged to think the same. Parents can find many opportunities in their daily family life to demonstrate how skills learned in school relate to the child's real world. Parents can be supportive of the child's efforts, regardless of report card grades.

Stressing parental involvement. The parent's role in the child's education extends into the school. Parents should take time to know and work with the people at the school. It will not always be easy to discuss parental involvement with parents. Remember, the *child* benefits from your efforts. You may find another book in this series helpful in talking with parents about their role. *Partners in Urban Education: Getting It Together at Home* is written especially for parents, with numerous practical ideas for helping children learn.

Helping the School Understand Its Role

There are many things that school people can do to work with the community to help the urban child get the kind of education he deserves. School people can help make the school what it is intended to be—the community educational center.

Stressing personal relationships. The personal relationships between school personnel and community residents are very important to the cooperation between home and school. Community residents should know that they are welcome in the school. You can contribute a great deal to this effort. You can alert teachers and administrators about sensitive matters regarding personal relationships with community people. Probably the best kind of information to pass on to school personnel is the fact that community residents have a great deal to contribute to the total education of children. Their contributions should be sought and valued.

Sharing school facilities. One meaningful way to bring school and community together in the education of children is to share community facilities. The school can lead the way in this kind of cooperation. Most school buildings are locked up each afternoon. They are closed on weekends. Yet these facilities could be put to good use in the community. Community groups should be encouraged to make use of school facilities. You can assist in this effort by helping school personnel become aware of the need for meeting facilities and suggesting that perhaps responsible community groups could have access to the school in after-school hours.

Sharing community facilities. There are many facilities in the community that the school could make good use of. Children learn best through practical experiences. Teachers should be encouraged to take students to stores, factories, and office buildings where practical learning experiences are available. When school personnel communicate a need for the use of community facilities, community people are directly involved in the total education of a child. Sharing of community facilities contributes a great deal toward bringing school and community together.

Using community resource people. Every community has its share of talented people filling a variety of roles. Certainly the school should make use of these community residents as resource people in the classroom. Children learn more about the world of work

from workers than they learn from textbooks. Children should be exposed to carpenters and caterers, doctors and dishwashers, garage owners and garbage collectors, lawyers and laborers, and the whole host of community workers. You can assist in this effort by pointing out community workers who have valuable information to share in the classroom. Again, involving community residents in the educational process brings school and community closer together.

Focusing on Children

Helping to bring the school and community together may seem at times to place you in the middle. If you identify too closely with the school, the community may feel that you are turning away from them. If you represent only the community, the school may accept you with hesitancy or suspicion. Your role as an aide will mean focusing on what will benefit children. You must not try to justify or defend the school as an institution. That is a job for others. When you represent the community, it should be in terms of how the community can contribute to better education for children.

Your job will not be easy. Being in the middle never is. Bringing school and community together may well be the greatest challenge you will face. But it is a challenge worth accepting and worth dealing with—for you, for the community, for the school, but most of all for the children you are committed to serve.

4 Learning New Skills

Working as a school aide may be quite different from other jobs you have had. If you have worked with people before, you will simply have to add to your knowledge of working with people. You will also be required to work with learning materials. This will not be difficult. Probably every job you have had required you to work with tools of some kind. Learning materials are simply the tools you will use in your job as a school aide.

Because the duties of school aides vary from school to school, no handbook can tell every aide all he or she will need to know about aide skills. This section will provide, however, some general kinds of information you will need about skills required for work as a school aide.

Most school aides need to develop three kinds of basic skills: classroom skills, clerical skills, and communication and leadership skills. Some skills are easier to master than others. Some skills require more formalized training than others. You must not feel you have to master every skill right away. Choose one. Concentrate on that skill. Master it and move on to the next. You will find the going much easier than you thought it could be.

Classroom Skills

Assisting in the classroom calls for a great variety of skills. Yet mastering classroom skills makes it possible for you to work directly with children in instructional activities.

Supervising children. You will be expected to help with the general supervision of groups of students in every school, elementary or secondary. Children often need some degree of supervision on playgrounds, in corridors, lunchrooms, cloakrooms, and lavatories, as well as in the classroom. The movement of groups of children seems to generate an excitement that can sometimes get out of hand. You will have to develop your own style of supervising groups of children. You will get ideas by watching teachers and other aides supervise groups. Circumstances will also affect how you will operate. For example, passing another classroom should be done more quietly than walking to a neighborhood library. Your demands should not be more restrictive than necessary. Somehow, straight, silent lines seem more suitable for a military parade field or a prison than for a school. Children will respond to your shouts and physical contact with more of the same. While every group of children has its clown or mischief-maker, most school youngsters will respond to you with respect, especially when you treat *them* with respect.

Working with learning materials. An important part of the instructional activity of the classroom is

providing the teaching materials or supplies. You may be asked to prepare the classroom for demonstrations, projects, lectures, and other instruction. It will be important for you to learn the names and locations of available materials. In an elementary school there might be books, math materials, records, and the like. These are often kept in the classroom or in a common storage area. In a high school you would find a greater variety of materials, usually stocked in a departmental storeroom. By observing how the materials are used and by reading labels and the accompanying directions, you will soon become familiar with the materials. With experience, you will be able to anticipate which supplies will be needed for certain lessons.

Keeping things in order. In every classroom there are a number of housekeeping tasks that need attention from time to time. Checking supplies, setting up learning centers and displays, putting up bulletin boards, and signing out books are examples. Depending upon the grade level, you may be asked to take over or at least supervise some of these tasks. Most of these duties do not require you to learn new skills. It will be important, however, that you learn what is expected. You will find that children can assist you in these housekeeping tasks. Some of these housekeeping tasks provide valuable learning experiences for children. You will, of course, want to discuss this matter with the teacher before assigning tasks to students.

Tutoring individual students. Assisting individual children with their lessons may be one of your duties. You will need to learn some tutoring skills to be really effective in this work. If your school system does not offer the training you need, the teacher will give you specific instructions on how to assist the children. The reading consultant may have materials to help you tutor children in reading.

Conducting small-group activities. If you are asked to handle small-group activities in the classroom, you will need specific skills. In some schools, formal training is required before you can be assigned this type of duty. This training is most often provided at a college or university. First, you need background in the subject matter content. Subjects such as mathematics, science, and even language have changed a great deal since the average adult was a student. By observing class activities and by reading available textbooks, you can acquire a great deal of general knowledge in specific subject areas.

You will also need to develop skills in different techniques of leading small-group activities. Most schools have professional libraries that contain books or pamphlets on questioning skills, discussion leadership, and project development. By reading, careful planning with the teacher, and analysis of what works well for you, you can develop the skills necessary to handle small-group activities successfully.

Clerical Skills

Many of your duties will involve clerical skills. Your clerical tasks will be generally related to classroom activities rather than to duties in the school office. By learning new clerical skills, you increase your opportunities for service. Classroom clerical duties are sometimes tedious and time-consuming. But you should remember that they are valuable and necessary to the smooth-running classroom.

Keeping records. In every classroom a generous amount of record-keeping is required. There are official records, such as enrollment reports, daily attendance records, and report cards. Most teachers have their own system of recording assignments, grades, pupil advancement, and parent contacts. Many of the newer instructional kits also require recording or charting pupil progress through a learning program. If you did not receive training in record-keeping during your orientation, the teacher will provide the information you need. If any records are to have meaning, they must be accurate. This will take concentration on your part. Where possible, record-keeping tasks should be done before the children have arrived or while they are engaged in activities not requiring your attention.

Handling finances. In some schools, you may be called upon to handle money. Money for milk, lunch tickets, field trips, school fees, books, and school pictures are examples. It is necessary to account for these

funds with 100 percent accuracy. Younger children should be requested to bring money to school in an envelope. The envelope should clearly state how the money is to be used. When you accept money from students, make a note of it right away. Never mix school funds with your personal money. Any money to be held over to another day should be deposited in the school office rather than kept in the classroom or in your locker. Your careful attention to the handling of funds will prevent the embarrassment of explaining a shortage or a surplus.

Duplicating materials. Almost every classroom uses some form of duplicated assignment sheets, work sheets, tests, or messages to parents. The teacher can assist you in learning to operate the duplicating equipment. The most common machine is the spirit duplicator. A carbon master is attached to a large roller; fluid is turned on, and a supply of paper added. Fifty turns of the handle result in fifty inexpensive copies. A few times through the process with the teacher and you will be an old hand at it. Producing a large number of better-looking copies requires more complex equipment. Often, best results are obtained if only one person always operates this equipment. Usually this person is the school secretary.

Preparing materials for duplication. Preparing materials for duplication takes more time and skill than duplicating materials. It will be important for you to discuss your ideas for preparing materials with the teacher. She may have samples she has

collected or used before. Occasionally she may want you to see commercially prepared masters that the school has purchased. If you are asked to prepare materials for duplication, you will do your work on a carbon master. A carbon master is a special kind of paper that is white on top and has carbon paper beneath. You will have to take special care to be sure that any words you write are legible, especially when preparing materials for young children. Some schools have typewriters that are used to prepare masters. These typewriters usually have large type. If you type the carbon master, make sure that the page does not become too crowded. Again, the teacher can suggest the amount of material that should be placed on each carbon master. She can also make suggestions as to how the material should be arranged on the master.

Preparing instructional material. You may assist in the preparation of other types of instructional materials. The kinds of materials you are asked to prepare can involve you in writing spelling words on the chalkboard or preparing slides for an overhead projector. If you are assisting in primary grades, it will be helpful for you to learn the handwriting system being taught so that your writing examples are consistent with the teacher's. The teacher will provide you with a sample you can use. You will need special training to prepare slides for an overhead projector. The teacher or the audio-visual specialist can provide this training.

Using typing skills. Typing is a valuable skill. Many clerical duties can be done more effectively with some typing ability. You might look for an evening adult class or a vocational school course to help you get started. This kind of classwork will provide you with the expert instruction, the use of good machines, and the discipline of regular practice that will make this skill somewhat easier to master.

Communication and Leadership Skills

The importance of communicating with people has been discussed several times in this handbook. As an aide you will be communicating with pupils, teachers, administrators, and parents continuously. Improving your communication skills will lead to increased job effectiveness, as well as personal growth.

Learning to listen. A most important element of good communication is listening. Listening is the most rapid means of gaining new data or learning new ideas. Yet few of us are good listeners. You can increase your listening skills by concentrating on being attentive to a speaker and listening for his whole thought. You should reserve judgment and not begin forming your reply until the speaker is finished. Asking clarifying questions and repeating what you think has been said tend to increase understanding.

Learning to speak. If listening is how we receive most ideas, talking is the means we use most often to share

our ideas and thoughts. Your duties as an aide will require that you talk with people regularly. Your words will have more meaning to your listeners as you gain skill in talking and speaking. You should develop the habit of speaking with clear, distinct pronunciation. In schools, the language patterns of standard English are usually preferred over nonstandard English, or "street talk." By listening carefully, reading extensively, and practicing often, you can improve your speech patterns and expand your vocabulary.

Learning to express ideas. The ideas you communicate are more important than the words you use to communicate. Our ideas are constantly changing, as we compare, analyze, and evaluate new thoughts in the light of past experience. As we express ideas, we need to put them in order to fit the circumstances and use appropriate words to carry them to our listeners. Your skill in communicating ideas can grow as you think about your school, listen to others, discuss issues, and read what others are thinking.

Learning to lead. Your activities as a school aide will provide opportunities for you to assume certain leadership roles. These may involve leading a community-based study group, a staff subcommittee, or a school advisory council. Any group of this type needs members who are skillful in resolving conflict, involving all members in activities, promoting forward progress, summarizing ideas, and reaching for

consensus. You can learn these leadership skills by observing public meetings, reading about the way groups function, and then getting plenty of practice through personal involvement in groups. It is not easy to be a good leader. In fact, many people find it difficult even to take part in a group discussion. You should remember that some of the best leaders developed leadership skills by becoming active participants in discussion-type activities. Each time you take part in a group discussion, you are building important leadership skills.

Thinking About Skill Development

The principal or your supervisor may suggest certain skills you need to develop and suggest ways you can develop these skills. This will be helpful to you. But in the long run, you are the one who really determines the kinds of skills that will be most valuable to you as a school aide and as a human being. If you rely on others to suggest the kinds of skills you need to develop, you may find that you will never realize how much you can really do.

Take some time to think about the skills you already possess that could be put to good use in a school situation. Do you sew or cook well? Could these skills be used in home economics classes or in career awareness lessons? Do you sketch or paint well? Is there a need for these skills in the classroom? Do you have a special talent for organization or handling social situations? Is there a need for these skills in

"Visitation Day" activities or parent-teacher conferences? Are you able to understand people and how they feel? Can this talent be put to better use in the classroom or in school-community relationships?

Remember, every skill you have and every new skill you learn contribute to *your* total education and help make you effective in school situations and in situations outside the school. Most people enjoy doing those things they can do well. As you increase your skills, you will find greater pleasure and satisfaction in your increased service to children and teachers. And you will be a little more satisfied with yourself.

5 Preparing for Greater Responsibility

You may be a housewife, a college student, or a grandfather. You may have accepted the job as a school aide for any number of reasons. Perhaps you wanted a chance to work with children. Perhaps you were anxious to put some extra time to good use. Or perhaps you wanted to add to your family income. You probably had very little idea about the variety of things you would be involved in. At this point you are probably ready to add a few titles of your own to the growing list of titles for school aides.

As long as you are a school aide, you will continue to develop new skills and continue to have opportunities for new work experiences. Perhaps you are happy working as a school aide and want to excel in your profession. But perhaps other jobs interest you. You may have the ability to work well with people, and the area of counseling may appeal to you. You may really like representing the school in the community and find that you are attracted to a career in public relations. And you may even discover that with training you could be an excellent classroom teacher and decide to earn your teaching certificate. You may find yourself thinking of ways to expand your role and prepare yourself for greater responsibility. That's what this chapter is all about.

In-service Training

Many school systems provide in-service skill training for their employees. You will generally find in-service training experiences aimed at teaching very specific job skills. For example, a class on processing books may be conducted for library aides. Another, on the preparation of art materials, may be conducted for primary grade aides. A class for high school hall monitors may emphasize skills in human relations or provide suggestions for dealing with disruptive students. The topics for in-service training classes are usually selected in response to the needs expressed by large numbers of aides or certain schools.

Attending classes. In-service training classes will usually last only a few days. If you are required to attend these classes, they will usually be held during your regular working hours or during school vacation periods. If attendance is voluntary, classes may be held after regular school hours. In-service classes not only will offer you a chance to learn a specific skill, but also will broaden your general understanding of how your school system operates.

Knowing what to expect. The expense of in-service training in public institutions is justified as a means of increasing employee skills in the jobs they now hold. In general, in-service training is not intended to qualify you for a different position. For example, you should not expect in-service classes for school aides, offered at school expense, to prepare you for a secretarial or teaching job.

Training in Junior Colleges

If your goal is to seek promotion or to move to a more advanced job, you will need to obtain additional formal education. Often this can be done most easily and economically in a local junior or community college.

Knowing where to begin. If you did not graduate from high school, you can ask the staff at your local junior college to help you prepare for the high school equivalency test so that you can get your high school diploma. Most urban community colleges have evening adult classes in general education if you desire to improve reading, speaking, or writing skills. Classes are also offered in child care, office skills, psychology, sociology, and other areas of interest and benefit to you as a school aide.

Preparing for advancement. In response to the growing employment of nonprofessionally trained community persons in schools and agencies, some junior colleges have designed programs to prepare people for these jobs. An example is the Milwaukee Area Technical College (Milwaukee, Wisconsin), which offers Associate Degree programs for the Community Service Aide and the School Service Aide. The partial list of courses taken from the School Service Aide program indicates that the program is specifically designed to equip the graduate for work as a school aide. Some of the courses are offered in the late afternoon and evening so that those who work may enroll.

First Year:	Introduction to School Service
	Communication Skills 1 & 2
	Physical Education
	Reading and Study Skills
	Psychology of Human Relations
	Interpersonal Communication
	Children's Literature
	Learning and Development
	Instructional Media
	Basic Economics
Second Year:	Language Arts Activities
	Art Activities for Children
	Health, Safety, and Games for Children
	Concept Development Activities
	Classroom Management
	Field Work
	American Institutions
	Mathematics Workshop
Electives:	Group Leadership Skills
	Black Literary Masters
	Typewriting
	American History 1 & 2
	Marriage and the Family
	Problems and Programs of the City
	Survey of Physical Geography

Meeting personal interests. Community colleges and technical schools offer courses in a variety of areas. If your goals are in office work, technical training, sales, health services, or law enforcement, you will probably find courses to meet your needs. You will

also find courses to meet personal interests. Home carpentry, clothes tailoring, art appreciation, and speed reading are examples of continuing education courses.

Training in Colleges

You may have set your sights beyond school aide work. Perhaps some other phase of school work appeals to you, such as testing and measurement, audio-visual technology, or school library work. You may want to qualify for a teaching certificate. You may be interested in something completely outside the area of education—perhaps electronics, finance, nursing, editing, or general business management.

All these areas of employment require specialized training or a college degree. It usually takes a full-time student three to four years to get a degree. If you work part time as an aide, you will have to think about a long-range educational program of six to eight years to reach such a goal. However, once you are involved in college work, you will find that time passes more quickly than you thought it would.

By living in an urban center, you have one or more colleges or universities close at hand. Urban colleges often provide special counseling programs, financial aid, tutoring assistance, and evening schedules to meet the needs of working students. A telephone call to the college admissions office will result in the information you need.

Preparing for a New Kind of Job

One of the growing themes of modern education is the emphasis on personalized teaching. More and more school districts are turning to "ungraded" primary schools, middle schools, modular scheduling, and learning centers. All these ideas are aimed at providing each child with a practical, individually planned education.

Looking at traditional schools. In the traditional school organization, each teacher is assigned 25 to 35 children for a period of time and is provided a separate teaching space. The teacher may be assigned an aide to assist with certain duties. She may accept a student teacher, for whom she will provide practice-teaching experience. She will perhaps call on specialists to help work with certain children. However, the teacher alone is responsible for the instruction of the 25 to 35 children.

Looking at nontraditional schools. In nontraditional schools, we might find a team of 3 to 6 teachers, several aides, a student teacher or two, and perhaps specialists assigned to the team part time, all assuming responsibility for a group of 100 to 200 students. The staff members divide up the different teaching tasks according to their training, skill, and talent. One teacher may serve as leader. Children are divided into groups varying in size according to type of activity and the individual needs. The role of the aide becomes an important part of the entire learning program. Aides with different degrees of training can

assume various aspects of the teaching tasks. While teachers are working with large groups, the aides may be engaged in providing skill practice with individuals or small groups. While the teachers are conducting discussions with small groups, the aides might supervise a test with a large group.

Looking at advancement possibilities. In these new organizations, many skills will be needed and planned for. Some educators see working in this type of program as the ideal way to train new teachers. A college student might start out as a beginning helper and, as she gains skill and additional training, move up a "career ladder" until she finally becomes a skilled and fully certified teacher. An older aide might be inspired to go back to college while continuing her employment as a school aide, until she is qualified to become a licensed teacher. However, there will continue to be a need for men and women who enjoy the role of school aide but who have no desire to return to college or seek a teaching career.

Making It All Work for You

The major emphasis of this handbook has been on how you can help others. You have read a lot about what being a school aide means to others and about what it should mean to you. Now is the time to ask, "What *does* this job mean to me?" Do you see working with young people in the school situation as important, as worthwhile, as the kind of work that will help you fulfill your life's ambitions? Are there really opportunities to learn new skills, to

uncover talents, to open doors to new goals? The only way you can determine whether the job of school aide is really helping you is to look at some of the benefits you gain that have nothing to do with working with either teachers, or children, or parents.

Additional income. One direct benefit *you* derive from working as a school aide is having additional income. Salaries for school aides vary from one community to another. Right now, the pay range seems to be from about $3000 to $6500 for a full school year. Your salary will be partly determined by the responsibilities you are given. In addition, you can usually expect some fringe benefits such as social security, health insurance, sick-leave, and perhaps life insurance and retirement benefits.

Additional education. You cannot help but add to your basic education by working as a school aide. You know you will learn some specific job skills. You will learn a little more about the educational process. And you will learn a little more about the kinds of jobs available in education. You may find that there are jobs you never knew existed. Few jobs will give you the opportunity to learn more than you will learn as a school aide.

Additional responsibility. Before you worked as a school aide you may have limited yourself in the kinds of jobs you thought you could do. Perhaps you thought you were only qualified to work in a factory or to take care of children in your home. Perhaps

you thought you only knew enough to be a checker in a grocery store or a salesclerk in a department store. You may have been reluctant to accept jobs that required you to take on greater responsibilities. The fact that you accepted a job as a school aide is a step in the right direction. Continue to look for ways you can accept greater responsibilities. You will find that you will learn a great deal about what you can do. As a school aide you will learn that with hard work and experience you can go very far. You will not have to limit yourself when thinking about the kinds of jobs that would make you most happy.

Additional interests. If you are like most people, you may find that you have been doing the same things year after year. If you liked playing bridge twenty years ago, you may find that you are still playing bridge, although the game no longer interests you. If you liked painting as a child, you may be painting today simply because you haven't found another interest. Working as a school aide will probably make it easier for you to become interested in and to enjoy new things. You may discover a special talent for drama or woodworking or math. Few people who work as school aides find themselves with extra time on their hands. The reason for this is directly related to finding new interests.

Thinking About Your Future

When you began reading this handbook, you were probably concerned with your today. You have done a lot of thinking since that time. You have thought

about yourself and the kinds of special skills and talents you have. You should not be surprised to find that you have a higher opinion of yourself and greater hopes for your future.

The field of education has never been more exciting. New ideas are being introduced every day. New materials are being designed to meet today's needs. Community colleges are working toward increasing their abilities to provide for the needs of community residents. You have learned that the total education of the child does not begin or end at the school door. You should remember that *your* education did not end when you left public school. By now you know it is never too late to begin a new career. It is never too late to learn to paint or sew or teach. Your job as a school aide will expose you to many ideas about what your future can be.

Hopefully, your future will include becoming a good school aide. Hopefully, your future will include a great deal of satisfaction from working with children and helping them learn to develop into mature and responsible adults. And hopefully, you will realize the great rewards that come from working as an aide in an inner-city school. You have joined a worthwhile team. And you will be valued as a partner in urban education.

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